facilitating investment in the country by international companies, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and other foreign investments and to ensure expeditious clearance of the proposals for foreign investment.

Market share of sail in crude steel production

1010. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMA CHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the market share of SAIL out of the total crude steel production in the country; and

(b) the steps taken to modernise Steel Authority of India Limited to get better improved production with cost reduction?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) Out of a total production of 21.942 million tonne of Crude Steel in the country during the year 1995-96, SAIL including IISCO has produced 10.637 million tonne.

(b) SAIL has undertaken modernisation of its three existing integrated steel plants at Durgapur, Rourkela and Bokaro with the objectives of Technological Upgradation, attaining higher productivity, economy in cost of production, energy conservation, improvements of yield and reduction of environmental pollution. The steps to modernise inter-alia involve phasing out of Open Hearth Furnaces, introduction of latest BOF technology, adoption of continuous casting in place of ingot route, improvement in productivity by restoration of health of plants and equipment and optimum utilisation of capacity, etc.

Workshop on the role of wholesale markets for Urban Food Distribution System in Asia

1011. SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether some four day workshop on "the role of wholesale markets for urban food distribution system in Asia" was organised at New Delhi in recent past;

(b) if so, details thereof with the background;

(c) whether some suggestions for efficient marketing promotion of agricultural produce in Asia and Pacific were given in the workshop;

(d) whether some decisions to channelise the agricultural surpluses were also taken in the workshop; and

(e) if so, steps proposed to be taken to implement the suggestions as well as decisions?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. A workshop was organised at Surajkund near Delhi.

(b) The Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific (AFMA), an institution sponsored by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), approached Food Corporation of India for holding the Workshop in India with a view to share the experiences in 13 AFMA countries on the role of wholesale markets for urban food distribution system. The Workshop consisted of presentation of case study papers, technical sessions and field trips for inter-action of experiences in the member countries.

(c) to (e) The Workshop made certain general recommendations.

Excavation of diamond mines in Madhya Pradesh

1012. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that global tenders had been floated by Government of Madhya Pradesh for excavating diamond from Deobhog and other mines in Raipur district;

(b) if so, the details of the applicants thereto and modus operandi of short listing the applications;

(c) whether it is a fact that NMDC and MMTC have not been included in the last three concerns selected for final allotment; and

(d) if so, the rationale thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (d). The Madhya Pradesh Government invited applications for prospecting of Diamonds and Alexandrite in South-Eastern part of Raipur District in April, 1994. In response 23 applicants, including some Indian public sector and private sector companies applied. The State Government has selected the following applicants for grant of prospecting rights and has sought Central Government's prior approval under Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957:—

(i) De Beers (India) Prospecting Ltd.

(ii) M/s CRA Exploration (India) Ltd. and

(iii) M/s Ashton Mining India Pvt. Ltd.

However, the Central Government has returned this proposal to the State Government of Madhya Pradesh and has asked the State Government to re-examine the proposal in the light of the guidelines communicated to the State Governments by the Central Government by letter dated 30.10.1996 on issue of grant of prospecting licence over large areas.

Involvement of a voluntary organisation in selling of Children

1013. SMT. KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had asked the State Govt. of Orissa for a report on the alleged involvement of 'Basundhra' a voluntary Organisation in the selling of children in the name of adoption;

(b) if so, the details of the report submitted by the State Govt. in this regard; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) to (c) This Ministry has received a number of complaints and allegations from senior citizens of Cuttack as well as MLAs of Orissa Government stating that the organisation Basundhra is involved in malafide activities which inter-alia relate to selling of children in name of adoption. The State Commission for Women had also asked for investigation of the activities of placement agencies in Orissa including that of Basundhra. The Government has contacted the appropriate authorities under the Government of India to conduct an investigation of the activities of this organisation and submit a report which is awaited. The State Government has not been asked to submit a report. However, they have been informed of the action taken by this Ministry.

Supply of Rice and Wheat to the poor at half the normal price under PDS

1014. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJI-RAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to supply a certain quantity of rice and wheat at half the normal price for the poor under Public Distribution System as announced by PM in his Independence Day speech on August 15, 1996;

(b) if so, how much it will cost the Central Government by way of enhanced subsidy; and

(c) the steps being taken to identify the poor for whom the subsidy is meant and to ensure that the benefit of the scheme reaches them?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The issue of streamlining the PDS with focus on the poor by issuing commodities at half the normal issue price to the population below poverty line as announced by the Prime Minister in his Independence Day Address on August 15, 1996 is under consideration of the Government.